



Tips for Hiring a Sign Language Interpreter

For many service providers and businesses, receiving a request from a Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind person for interpreting or transliterating services is a new experience. The following information is designed to assist you in obtaining interpreting/transliterating services in North Carolina.

Where do I find an interpreter?

- www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/interpreter/interpreter.htm

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing maintains a directory of NC licensed interpreters and interpreting agencies (as required by General Statute 8b).

- <https://www.rid.org/acct-app/index.cfm?action=search.members>

The National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf maintains a searchable database of sign language interpreters and interpreting agencies nationwide.

How do I know if an interpreter is qualified?

- Simply knowing sign language does not make one a qualified interpreter. An interpreter's role is to accurately convey all messages between the individuals involved; this requires proficient interpreting and language skills and ethical integrity.
- Interpreters who are nationally certified through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) have met or exceeded minimum professional standards in areas such as but not limited to linguistics, ethics, culture, processes of interpreting and professionalism. They have passed exams and are deemed competent to interpret from English to American Sign Language and vice versa, in most situations. RID also awards legal certification to interpreters who have additional training and knowledge about legal vocabulary and proceedings and have passed an additional exam. www.rid.org
- In addition, the state of NC requires interpreters to hold a valid interpreting or transliterating license in order to work and earn compensation. (Educational and religious settings are the only exceptions.) In order for an interpreter to be eligible for a license, they must hold RID certification(s) and/or possess specialized education and years of experience. Visit www.ncitlb.org for more information regarding NC's interpreting/transliterating license law.

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- Certified and licensed individuals must also participate in professional skill development and adhere to a Code of Professional Conduct.

How do I request an interpreter?

- You may ask the person who is deaf if they can recommend an interpreter or interpreting agency.
- You can hire individual interpreters OR an interpreting agency.
 - Hiring an individual interpreter allows you to negotiate rates but you may have to contact several interpreters to locate one who may be available.
 - Hiring an interpreting agency may be more expensive but the agency is responsible for contacting interpreters and negotiating fees. They also have knowledge about an interpreter's skills and abilities.
- When you make initial contact with individual interpreters, only provide them with basic information such as date, time and general location (city or specific area of town) of the assignment. This will help ensure the confidentiality of those individuals involved.
 - Interpreters often work in environments where they cannot answer the phone, leave a voice mail so that during a break or in between assignments they may be able to return your call.
- When you contact an agency, provide them all of the information about the assignment and they will schedule an interpreter for you.

What information should I discuss with the interpreter or agency?

- Discuss the estimated total cost for the assignment as interpreters and agencies may charge for minimum hours, mileage, parking, increased rates (depending on the time of the assignment) and other expenses.
- Discuss cancellation policies.
- Discuss how many interpreters will be needed?
 - Some assignments require more than one interpreter. The individual or agency may be able to help you assess your assignment depending on the length and complexity of the assignment and the needs of the individuals involved.

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- Be prepared to provide the interpreter or agency with the following information (if you discuss these over the phone, it is beneficial to follow up with an email confirming the details):
 - Date
 - Time (start time and anticipated end time)
 - Location (address including room number) and directions
 - Name of the contact person and their phone number
 - Format of the assignment (i.e. interview, doctor's appointment, annual check-up, meeting, presentation, counseling session, etc.)
 - Overview of the assignment (agenda, handouts, a copy of the PowerPoint that will be used, any background information, etc.)
 - This information is VERY helpful for the interpreter.
 - Also, is it extremely beneficial if you can clarify any acronyms, jargon or vocabulary particular to the assignment.
 - Names of the people involved, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing and if applicable, names of the other interpreter(s).
 - The deaf person's language preference (ASL, English-like signing, tactile, low vision)
 - Procedure and contact information for submitting the bill

How do I know if I need more than one interpreter?

- Interpreting assignments lasting an hour or more generally require two interpreters. Size of the audience, dynamics of the setting and language needs are often factors influencing the need for more than one interpreter. A professional interpreter or interpreting agency may be able to assist you in evaluating the assignment to determine the number of interpreters needed. You may also contact the Interpreting Services Specialists at the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing for further guidance, 800-851-6099.

Who pays for interpreters?

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law designed to protect individuals with disabilities, including individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ADA recognizes sign language interpretation as a reasonable accommodation. Most organizations (e.g., hospitals, doctor's offices, lawyer's, State and local government agencies, educational institutions, courts) are required by the ADA to secure and pay for these services, when necessary, to ensure effective communication.

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- A fee may not be charged to the patient/consumer/client who is deaf or hard of hearing to cover interpreting services.
- For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, visit www.ada.gov.

Other things to consider...

- Be flexible when scheduling meetings and appointments. If you are having difficulty securing an interpreter they may be available at a slightly different hour or on another day.
- The more notice you give an interpreter the better chances of finding one. Two to three weeks is ideal.
- Establish ongoing relationships with individuals or agencies. Interpreters who work with you regularly may be more willing to accommodate your needs.
- If you know you will need an interpreter for several assignments, such as an on-going meeting or regularly scheduled appointment, schedule these with the people involved and the interpreter at the same time. This will allow the interpreter to commit to those dates and reduce the need for you to make several phone calls.
- If you use interpreters often and/or have unique needs (such as needing interpreters with very little notice or in the evening) you may consider contracting with a specific individual or agency and/or creating a staff interpreter position.
- For additional information such as, “**Tips for Working with a Sign Language Interpreter**” and “**American Sign Language**,” please visit the N.C. Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing’s Brochures and Fact Sheet webpage at: www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/brochures/brochures_category.htm

Where do I find more information?

You may request additional information or consultation from staff at one of the following N.C. Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing’s Regional Centers:

Asheville:

12 Barbeta Drive
Asheville, NC 28806
800-681-8035 TTY • 800-681-7998 V

Charlotte:

5501 Executive Center Dr., Suite 101
Charlotte, NC 28212
704-568-8505 TTY • 704-568-8558 V
800-835-5306 TTY • 800-835-5302 V
704-568-9615 Fax

Greensboro:

122 North Elm Street, Suite 900
Greensboro, NC 27401
336-273-9692 V/TTY
888-467-3413 V/TTY
336-256-0689 Fax

Morganton:

517 C West Fleming Dr.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-432-5336 TTY • 828-432-5335 V
800-205-9920 TTY • 800-999-8915 V

Raleigh:

2301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2301
919-874-2212 V • 919-874-2214 TTY
800-851-6099 V/TTY • 919-855-6872 Fax

Wilmington:

3340 Jaekle Drive, The Randall Bldg., Suite 104
Wilmington, NC 28403
800-205-9916 TTY • 800-205-9915 V

Wilson:

2705 Wooten Blvd SW
Wilson, NC 27893
252-243-1951 TTY • 252-243-3104 V
800-205-9925 TTY • 800-999-6828 V
252-243-7634 Fax

www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh



State of North Carolina • Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing
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